

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

THE CAAN FILM FESTIVAL: A TWELVE-FILM CELEBRATION OF JAMES CAAN

May 19–28, 2017

Astoria, New York, April 27, 2017—For two glittering weekends at the end of May, the world turns its attention to the movie event of the year: [The Caan Film Festival](#) at Museum of the Moving Image. In celebration of the Bronx-born, Sunnyside-raised, and Sanford Meisner-instructed actor, the film series revisits twelve of James Caan's greatest performances, from May 19 through 28, with nearly all films presented in 35mm. The films feature performances for such great directors as Francis Ford Coppola, Howard Hawks, Michael Mann, Sam Peckinpah, Mark Rydell, Norman Jewison, Wes Anderson, and James Gray.

“For over half a century, James Caan has lent his incomparable magnetism to a wide spectrum of films, playing both tough guys and punching bags, talkers and mumblers, charmers and monsters,” said Associate Curator of Film Eric Hynes. “With his broad-shouldered athleticism and a granite-cut jaw, Caan brings a frank physicality to the screen, making even mild-mannered performances seem subtly threatening. Yet he also freights a deep reserve of emotion, exemplifying a post-war American masculinity that is reinventing itself one mission, one conflict, one heartbreak at a time.”

The son of Jewish immigrants, James Caan could have taken over the family's meat delivery business, but instead wound his way through competitive sports (he played football at Michigan State) before alighting upon acting, which he pursued during the explosion of New York talent in the early 1960s. He appeared on TV and in bit parts in films throughout the decade, but received his biggest break via legendary director Howard Hawks—first by taking a lead role in the much-maligned *Red Line 7000*, and then supporting John Wayne in *El Dorado* (1966). Already in his late 20s and clearly ready for stardom, things took off from there. The series includes 1960s work such as *El Dorado* and *The Rain People* (1969), Caan's first of several collaborations with Francis Ford Coppola, and continues through his frenetic headlining period of the 1970s, including *Brian's Song* (1971); the underseen gem *Cinderella Liberty* (1973) for another frequent collaborator, Mark Rydell; *Slither* (1973); *The Killer Elite* (1975); and *Rollerball* (1975). Standouts from the '80s, '90s, and '00s also feature in the Festival, with perhaps his finest performance, as a Chicago safecracker in Michael Mann's *Thief* (1981), *Misery* (1990), *Honeymoon in Vegas* (1992), *Bottle Rocket* (1996), and *The Yards* (2000). Most films will be presented in 35mm.

Tickets are \$15 for each screening, with discounts for students, seniors, and youth (free or discounted for Museum members). Advance tickets are available online at movingimage.us/caan

SCHEDULE FOR 'THE CAAN FILM FESTIVAL,' MAY 19–28, 2017

Unless otherwise noted, tickets are \$15 adults (ages 18+), \$11 (Standard museum members, seniors and students), \$7 youth (ages 3–17), free or discounted for Museum members. Advance tickets are available online at <http://movingimage.us>. Tickets for screenings include same-day Museum admission.

Thief

FRIDAY, MAY 19, 7:00 P.M.

SATURDAY, MAY 27, 2:00 P.M.

Dir. Michael Mann. 1981. 122 mins. 35mm. With James Caan, Tuesday Weld, Willie Nelson, Jim Belushi, Robert Prosky, Dennis Farina. Michael Mann's debut film reveals a master already at work, and offered James Caan one of his greatest roles. After one final heist, safecracker Frank hopes to leave his criminal past behind, but string-pulling Leo (a fiendish Robert Prosky) has other plans in mind. Mann's moody male melodramatics are in full effect, finding luminosity in Chicago's dark alleys and mining the skittish pathos beneath Caan's hustle and brawn.

El Dorado

SATURDAY, MAY 20, 1:30 P.M.

Dir. Howard Hawks. 1966. 126 mins. 35mm. With John Wayne, Robert Mitchum, James Caan, Charlene Holt, Edward Asner. For his penultimate film, Howard Hawks recruited longtime collaborator John Wayne to star as a wizened gunslinger who teams up with an alcoholic sheriff, self-effacing played by Robert Mitchum, to defend a town against a greedy rancher and his hired guns. While Hawks, legendary DP Harold Rosson (*Singin' In the Rain*, *The Wizard of Oz*) and writer Leigh Brackett (*Rio Bravo*, *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back*), devise swirling, emotionally intricate set pieces, Caan—in his first major Hollywood role—manages to steal a measure of limelight from titans Wayne and Mitchum, adding a modern, low-key energy to the mix, and flashing his pearly grin as a deadly weapon.

The Rain People

SATURDAY, MAY 20, 4:30 P.M.

Dir. Francis Ford Coppola. 1969. 101 mins. 35mm. With James Caan, Shirley Knight, Robert Duvall. Three years before earning his only Oscar nomination for *The Godfather*, James Caan teamed with director Francis Ford Coppola on this very different drama about a young married woman (Shirley Knight) fleeing from the weight of adulthood and obligation. Impulsively driving west, she picks up a hitchhiking football stud (Caan) for what certainly seems like an erotic encounter, but quickly becomes something far more fraught and complex. While Knight goes through a full spectrum of emotions, Caan stakes out a crucially temperate middle ground, absorbing what others project onto him while internally and quietly sifting through what remains of a traumatized mind.

Cinderella Liberty

SATURDAY, MAY 20, 7:00 P.M.

Dir. Mark Rydell. 1973. 117 mins. 35mm. With James Caan, Marsha Mason, Kirk Calloway, Eli Wallach, Burt Young, Bruno Kirby, Dabney Coleman. An overlooked gem from Hollywood's 1970s heyday, James Caan plays Baggs, a sailor marooned in Seattle on extended shore leave when his records are lost amid a ship transfer. After hustling each other in a pool hall, he falls for Maggie (Marsha Mason), a brassy part-time working girl who lives with her precious young son. Seemingly by compulsion, Baggs begins to play surrogate father and overprotective partner, even as Maggie's life and psyche start to unravel. Mason received an Academy Award nomination for her performance, but no less impressive is Caan as a man too long at sea suddenly determined to drop anchor and manufacture some measure of permanence. Shot by the great Vilmos Zsigmond and featuring an Oscar-nominated early score by John Williams.

Brian's Song

SUNDAY, MAY 21, 2:00 P.M.

Dir. Buzz Kulick. 1971. 73 mins. DCP. With James Caan, Billy Dee Williams, Jack Warden. The film that put James Caan on the map and invented the hetero-male weepie, *Brian's Song* tells the true story of Brian Piccolo (Caan) and Gayle Sayers (Billy Dee Williams), two running backs for football's Chicago Bears who went from positional rivals to dear friends, which only intensified when Piccolo came down with a terminal illness. Originally made for television in 1971, and dramatizing events that transpired in the years directly prior, *Brian's Song* became an immediate sports movie classic and inspirational interracial tale, and launching the careers of both Caan and Williams.

The Killer Elite

SUNDAY, MAY 21, 7:00 P.M.

Dir. Sam Peckinpah. 1975. 122 mins. 35mm. With James Caan, Robert Duvall, Arthur Hill, Bo Hopkins, Gig Young, Burt Young. Released during the heyday of the 1970s conspiracy thriller, Sam Peckinpah's *The Killer Elite* might rank as the most cynical of them all. James Caan plays Mike Locken, a contracted agent for a private security firm affiliated with the CIA. After getting double-crossed and critically shot by his partner (Duvall), he is determined to rehabilitate and resume his career, if only to avenge his betrayer. He gets his chance when called upon to save a Chinese anti-communist from marauding ninjas, a group that has recruited his old partner. While Caan was not a fan of the film—he once told Gene Siskel that he ranked the film “zero out of ten”—his weary disaffection and physical frustration (saddled with a limp and locked elbow for close to the duration of the film) perfectly suits Peckinpah's odd tonalities and dramatic subversions.

Rollerball

FRIDAY, MAY 26, 7:00 P.M.

Dir. Norman Jewison. 1975. 125 mins. 35mm. With James Caan, John Houseman, Maud Adams, John Beck, Moses Gunn. After playing football players in both *Brian's Song* and *The Rain People*, and a famously fist-happy thug in *The Godfather*, the physically formidable James Caan was asked to tackle two typecast tropes at once for *Rollerball*. This thoroughly '70s dystopian yarn posits a corporate-controlled future in which the world's most popular sport is a roller derby death match invoking the unholy elements of gridiron, hockey—even pinball—and anticipating the blood lust fandom of extreme fighting. When a blue-blooded honcho (Houseman) decides that the league's best player has become too popular, a Spartacus-style,

elbow-padded revolt gathers out on the rink.

Misery

SATURDAY, MAY 27, 4:30 P.M.

Dir. Rob Reiner. 1990. 107 mins. 35mm. With James Caan, Kathy Bates, Richard Farnsworth, Lauren Bacall. Famous for his imposing presence and strapping physique, James Caan spends close to the duration of *Misery* physically broken and detained, subjected to everything from imprisoning idolatry to femur-cracking punishment. Adapted from the Stephen King novel, Caan plays Paul Sheldon, a famous author rescued from a snowy car crash by shut-in superfan Annie Wilkes (Kathy Bates). As his protracted convalescence finally nears an end, Wilkes becomes increasingly, and sadistically, unwilling to let him go. While Bates took home a Best Supporting Actress Oscar for her hilarious and terrifying turn, Caan plays the perfect foil, the embodiment of a writer whose scorn for his own readers lies just beneath a beneficent surface.

The Yards

SATURDAY, MAY 27, 7:00 P.M.

Dir. James Gray. 2000. 115 mins. 35mm. With Mark Wahlberg, Joaquin Phoenix, Charlize Theron, James Caan, Ellen Burstyn, Faye Dunaway. Set in James Caan's childhood neighborhood of Sunnyside, and largely transpiring within eyeshot of the Museum, Queen native James Gray's *The Yards* brings an operatic emotional tenor to the lives of New York's working class strivers and schemers. Mark Wahlberg plays Leo Handler, a street criminal and recent ex-con who is destined for more trouble when he starts working for his uncle Frank (Caan), a rail contractor enriched by a history of shady dealings who also employs his best pal Willie (Joaquin Phoenix).

Slither

SUNDAY, MAY 28, 2:00 P.M.

Dir. Howard Ziff. 1973. 97 mins. 35mm. With James Caan, Peter Boyle, Sally Kellerman, Louise Lasser, Allen Garfield. In this madcap, kinetic, road-trip action comedy, James Caan plays a car thief (Dick) freshly released from prison whose intentions of going straight are thwarted when his best pal dies in his arms, but not before tipping him off to the hiding place of a large stash of stolen cash. With vultures swirling around him and his secret, Dick tries to keep a low profile, but that too is thwarted when he picks up free-spirited hitchhiker Kitty Kopetzky (Sally Kellerman) with thieving impulses of her own. "Mr. Caan, one of our best young leading actors, is a real surprise as the Candide-like ex-con. He is funny and dim without ever being dumb, which, for most actors, is as difficult as playing Lear."—Vincent Canby, *The New York Times*.

Honeymoon in Vegas

SUNDAY, MAY 28, 4:00 P.M.

Dir. Andrew Bergman. 1992. 96 mins. 35mm. With James Caan, Nicolas Cage, Sarah Jessica Parker, Pat Morita, Anne Bancroft, Peter Boyle. In this early '90s box office hit, James Caan sends up his own tough guy mystique by playing a morally corrupt middle-aged Vegas tycoon who secures a weekend away with a beautiful young woman (Sarah Jessica Parker) as collateral for her boyfriend's gambling debt. Neither Caan's musty extravagance nor Nicolas Cage's shambling commitment-phobe seem especially worthy of Parker, offering a fertile ground for hilariously doomed attempts at seduction. Events crescendo with an absurd and

excessive finale, replete with an aerial attack of Elvis impersonators that manages to live up to Sin City itself.

Bottle Rocket

SUNDAY, MAY 28, 6:30 P.M.

Dir. Wes Anderson. 1996. 91 mins. 35mm. With Owen Wilson, Luke Wilson, Andrew Wilson, Lumi Cavazos, James Caan. In Wes Anderson's beloved, tonally distinctive debut comedy, three aimless Texas friends aspire to a life of crime and outlaw notoriety, elaborately scheming up low-level burglaries that ride the line between fantasy role-play and real-world consequences. While Owen and Luke Wilson steal the show, James Caan turns up as an eccentric local con man named Mr. Henry who sets the boys up for their big take. He comes across as a forbidding tough guy, but may be just as delusional as his proteges.

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MUSEUM INFORMATION

Museum of the Moving Image (movingimage.us) advances the understanding, enjoyment, and appreciation of the art, history, technique, and technology of film, television, and digital media. In its stunning facilities—acclaimed for both its accessibility and bold design—the Museum presents exhibitions; screenings of significant works; discussion programs featuring actors, directors, craftspeople, and business leaders; and education programs which serve more than 50,000 students each year. The Museum also houses a significant collection of moving-image artifacts.

Hours: Wednesday-Thursday, 10:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Friday, 10:30 to 8:00 p.m. Saturday-Sunday, 11:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Museum Admission: \$15 adults (18+); \$11 senior citizens (65+) and students (18+) with ID; \$7 youth (ages 3–17). Children under 3 and Museum members are admitted free. Admission to the galleries is free on Fridays, 4:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Film Screenings: Friday evenings, Saturdays and Sundays, and as scheduled. Unless otherwise noted, ticket are \$15 adults / \$11 seniors and students / \$7 youth 3–17 / Free for members at the Film Lover and Kids Premium levels and above. Advance purchase is available online. Ticket purchase may be applied toward same-day admission to the Museum's galleries.

Location: 36-01 35 Avenue (at 37 Street) in Astoria.

Subway: M (weekdays only) or R to Steinway Street. W (weekdays only) or N to 36 Avenue.

Program Information: Telephone: 718 777 6888; Website: movingimage.us

Membership: movingimage.us/support/membership or 718 777 6877

Museum of the Moving Image is housed in a building owned by the City of New York and has received significant support from the following public agencies: New York City Department of Cultural Affairs; New York City Economic Development Corporation; New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature; Institute of Museum and Library Services; National Endowment for the Humanities; National Endowment for the Arts; and Natural Heritage Trust (administered by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation). For more information, please visit movingimage.us.